

**NH Charter School Advisory Group Meeting
March 11, 2014
NH DOE, Board Conference Room 10:00-12:00 am**

Attendees:

Matt Southerton, Meryl Levin, Ellen Ohlenbusch, Thomas Frischknecht, Tom Julius, Roberta Tenney, Lauren Morando Rhim, Judith Fillion, Heather McDonald, Jack Blodgett, and Eileen Leponis

1. Reviewed February minutes, Rhim to make minor edits as requested and resubmit to Commission chair to post online on NH DOE website
2. Discussed pending legislation (HB1128- Special Education Study Commission) and discussed drafting a letter asking to have a representative serve on the commission should the bill pass.
 - a. Commission discussed the fact that special education is an ongoing challenge for charter schools given extremely limited resources and in some districts, strained relationships with local education agencies responsible for providing special education and related services.
 - b. Action: Advisory group drafted a letter requesting representation on the special education advisory group.
 - c. HB1128 is expected to crossover to the Senate in April
 - d. McDonald made a motion to draft and submit the letter. Julius seconded the motion. All members supported the motion.
 - e. Rhim to draft the letter and send it to Ellen.
3. Commission discussed ongoing challenges associated with cost of operating facilities given limited operating dollars.
 - a. There is currently language in statute that allows the state to reimburse up to 30% of charter schools' facilities costs but it has not been allocated funds required to implement.
 - b. Commission members raised the option of charter schools being granted access to surplus facilities.
 - c. Commission members discussed possible strategies to seek changes to the law in order to secure more funds for facilities
4. Another challenge identified by members pertained to property taxes. If the traditional public schools own a building, they are exempt from property taxes but if a private citizen owns a building and rents to a charter school, they are currently not extended a reduction in their property tax bill.
5. Commission members reiterated basic challenge of inequitable funding which is an ongoing challenge for all charter schools in New Hampshire. While most states do not provide charter

schools with equitable funding, New Hampshire is on the extreme end with schools operating with less than half, and in some districts a third, of the funding of the average traditional public school.

6. Discussion related to priorities. Commission members shared their current challenges:
 - Building aid \$
 - Equitable funding
 - Special education
 - ELL support
 - Collective/consortia purchasing
 - Shared best practices- consortia
 - Exploration of charter schools to charge for kindergarten
 - Grants
 - Collaboration with SAU- Sup Association and charter school leadership/ charter school credits transfer
 - Technology- testing (funding issue)
 - Tax issues
 - Legal support/guidance

After a discussion, Commission members collapsed these concerns into five big categories

- District relationship
 - Consortia- purchasing and best practices
 - Facility- support and access
 - Special Education- provision of FAPE and LRE
 - Funding- equitable
7. After identifying current priorities, the Members discussed the overall importance of public relations and the critical role of addressing misperceptions about charter school.
 8. A Commission member suggested the group consider the following format for future meetings: Open meeting with a few minutes about hearing about one of our schools and then hear from topic specific working groups that will meet outside of the monthly commission meetings. The sub-groups would be charged with developing list of questions and then assigning people to do specific work/data collection around the activities.

Proposed Agenda for April 8th Meeting-

- School presentation-Julius volunteered to talk about Surry Village
- Matt to present findings from the survey monkey
- News and notes
- Set priorities for moving forward

11:56 meeting adjourned

Appendix: Draft Letter REL HB1128

Dear Honorable Representative Myler,

We, the members of the New Hampshire Charter School Advisory Commission, would like you to request an amendment to the proposed study Commission legislation HB1128 to expand the membership of the study Commission to include representation from Commission. Created by Section 194-B;7 VI of the NH Education Code, the Charter School Advisory Commission serves as a voice of charter schools across the state. While we respect and admire the members of the House Education Commission, we think it is essential that should the special education study Commission include a representative with a unique voice; that of charter schools navigating the existing system.

Thank you in advance for considering our request. We look forward to hearing back from you as the legislation progresses through the legislative process and we all continue to work to ensure that New Hampshire charter schools are accessible to all students.

Kind regards,

Ellen Ohlenbursch

Chair, New Hampshire Charter School Advisory Commission on behalf of the full Commission

Cc: Commission B
House Education Clerk Shaw
Chair of Senate health and education, Nancy Stiles
Legislative oversight Charter school oversight Commission
NH Charter School Advisory Commission